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tropolis had sunk to be merely a provincial city, far remote from the great seats of taste and art? A volume would not suffice to recount the external wonders of Petra; and still less to bring out to view the striking illustrations of the writings of the Hebrew prophets, afforded by the present state of the land of Edom. We had intended to conclude this article with some remarks upon the latter topic, and the abuse of it by literal interpreters; but we have already exceeded our limits.

ART. V. — *The Duchess de la Vallière. A Play. In Five Acts.* By the Author of “Eugene Aram,” &c. New York; Saunders & Otley. 12mo. pp. 131.

OBJECTS seen through a prism have a gorgeous, fantastical, unnatural appearance, quite striking at first, but wearisome in the repetition. So it is with life and manners, as seen in Mr. Bulwer's novels. They show us virtues caricatured, vices seductively garnished, generous qualities degraded by paltry motives, petty objects magnified, vulgarities glossed by fashion, and manners tinged with affectation. Whatever is veritable, honest, useful, and truly noble, finds little place in this *bizarre*, fictitious world. Such is the character of these works in general; but we will analyze them more in detail.

The author does every thing by rule, as mechanically, and with as little inspiration, as the cook makes a ragout from one of his thousand recipes. In the introduction to a recent edition of “The Disowned,” he gives us his *modus operandi*, showing at the same time how he has achieved his works, and by what rules they should be judged of. In the same spirit, he gives us occasional comments and explanations in his notes, to elucidate the incidents and the language of his *dramatis personæ*. This is virtually admitting the mediocrity of his work; for it is easy to imagine how out of place and trivial such analyses, keys, and running commentaries by the author himself, would be in the *chef-d'œuvres* of literature. Imagine Milton to have given a key to his Sampson Agonistes, or his Comus, or Shakespeare to his Falstaff or Hamlet, Addison to his Sir Roger, or Sir Walter Scott to his Baillie Jarvie. Genius does not

descend from its "highest heaven of invention" to justify its flight by metaphysical or historical disquisitions, by an affidavit or a rule of Quintilian. But Mr. Bulwer's is not a "muse of fire"; it is only a rhetorical muse, of a good high-school education, that is never "enraged, possessed, till madness rules the hour." He is in no danger of being carried away with his characters; like his "consummate puppy," as he rightly makes his "gentleman," Mr. Henry Pelham, denominate himself, he always knows what he is about, and not only so, he is very obligingly ready, by a side whisper, to let his readers into his secret.

It is in entire accordance with this industrious, mediocre, mechanical mode of proceeding, that he very often introduces his personages with an inventory of their features and dress, height of the person and of the forehead, color of the hair, teeth, and the model of the nose, whether Grecian, bottle, or eagle-beaked, and so on to the end of the catalogue, with the regularity of an anatomical lecture or a gazette of the fashions. But after all, it is only an aggregation of materials. *The being, the creature*, does not appear and make himself present to the reader. Forms are not to be conjured up in this way from the vasty deep of imagination. All the epithets of beautiful, lovely, cruel, fierce, odious, and so on, serve, it is true, to let us into the writer's design, but the qualities do not become embodied; they are still but so many abstractions. The ideal figures, if any, floating in the author's fancy, do not, in the end, breathe from the canvass. The reader does not imagine them to have ever been alive. His landscapes are wrought after the same method, and with like success. When Milton speaks of trim meadows pied with daisies, shallow brooks, and wide rivers, mountains on whose barren breasts rest laboring clouds, and towers and battlements bosomed high in tufted trees, the few expressions used, by that enchantment which belongs to the power of genius, open before you a vivid scene, more distinctly than can be done by exhausting the whole vocabulary of architecture and landscape gardening.

Another characteristic of these productions, as we have already hinted, is the utter selfishness and profligacy of sentiments that pervade the characters. Flattery is represented as one of the great instruments of success, and this, not by way of indirect satire upon a class in society, but as a just delineation of practical human nature. Thus Clarence Linden is

made, at the first encounter, to salute with a kiss Dame Bingo, the gipsy hag. Upon the same principle the same personage proceeds with the tradesmen among the electors ; and by the same process Pelham makes his brilliant career, as the author considers it, in the Parisian circles of fashion. To redeem this fault, of which the writer seems to be sensible, he gives us Mordaunt, accompanied with a dissertation upon his purity and exaltation of principle. But it is a sickly sort of energy, and a shy, unsocial sensitiveness, and dreamy philosophy, which constitute the elevation of this character ; quite admirable, it is true, for misses far gone in the novel mania and boarding-school lore, but of quite secondary interest with sensible men and women who distinguish true beauty and excellence. To such these novels are not adapted ; they are more congenial to the selfish, the heartless, the hypocritical, and those whose highest conceptions and aims do not rise above cleverness and cunning address ; who, feeling nothing of generous nobility and sincere enthusiasm, deem all mankind to be of the same stamp with themselves. These are the “fit audience” and not “few” of the author of Pelham, &c., their fit oracle.

We would not be understood to insist that the fabricators of airy nothings, with names and local habitations, for the amusement of idle persons, should limit themselves to the production of insipid pattern characters. *Quicquid agunt homines, est farrago libelli* ; the world is their stage, and they may well introduce such heroes of vice and folly, no less than of virtue and wisdom, as it supplies. But selfishness and egotism, with the vices and bad passions, have not blighted the whole surface ; there is something of moral beauty and majesty still extant, and the false pictures which virtually represent them as extinct, are libels upon human nature in general, however faithful they may be as likenesses of the artists who make them. The new school in imaginative literature, of which Byron is a leader, and Mr. Bulwer one of the followers, delights in confounding moral distinctions, and making the unsocial passions the predominant motives of action in the least depraved characters, and the vices in others. Pirates, highway robbers, thieves, and murderers are the heroes, and kept mistresses the heroines. They may say that they represent these personages as warnings rather than as models ; but what signify professions of this sort, when the fortunes of a raga-

muffin with a dirk in his bosom and pistols in his belt, or of a reprobate in a fashionable coat, are followed with a grave solicitude through a long series of extravagant adventures and surprising achievements in his line, to which all other events and interests are merely collateral and subordinate. It is in vain to allege a moral which is contradicted by the whole tone of the narrative. It is the spirit and principle of the work to extol what is diabolical, and elevate what is contemptible, and accordingly to degrade what is worthy and estimable.

In one of those passages in "*The Disowned*," where the author speaks aside to the reader, he says, "*The manners of the times, the characters which from peculiar constitutions of society derive peculiarities of distinction, become the natural, though, I confess, not the noblest, province of the novelist. The noblest sphere of his art is to add to exterior circumstances, which vary with every age, a painting of that internal world which in every age is the same; and, besides describing the fashion and the vestment, to stamp upon its portraits something of the character of the soul.*" This classification is sufficiently obscure; as well as we can make it out, it seems to be, that the best novelists represent character with manners; the second-rate, manners and modes of thinking without character; in which second class the author modestly ranks himself. It is hardly conceivable how a writer can invent and produce a character, without having in view the motives and principles of action and inmost sentiments. If he thus conceives and displays his characters, then he undertakes to "paint that internal world which in every age is the same"; if he does not so conceive and display them, the conception is crude, and the execution wavering, indistinct, and perhaps inconsistent. These are the very faults we have objected to in Mr. Bulwer's delineations. His notion, that his execution in this respect is the result of his system, or belongs to his province of novel-writing, is, we apprehend, an entire mistake; it is, we think, a matter of sheer necessity. His specimens are not merely in a subordinate line; they are incomplete; they do not come up to the mark aimed at. They consist too much of superficies; they have not soul enough, good or bad. As a part of the brain suffices for thinking, and a part of the lungs for breathing, so a fragment of a soul serves to animate these personages. And this is owing to a secondary style of

execution, not to the cultivation of a subordinate province in novel-writing.

But we are digressing from the subject proposed in quoting the above passage from our author, namely, his delineation of manners. By *manners* we mean the display of the social or unsocial sentiments in conversation, conduct, and deportment towards others. Good manners may be the spontaneous off-spring of social dispositions, and they are then pleasing to all persons, whether polished gentlemen and ladies, or clowns and the wives of clowns. And so manners of this origin are pleasing, in whatever subject they are found. It is only the silliest and most frivolous of people, such as either have not qualities enough in mass to come up to what may be ranked as a *character*, or have overlaid and smothered what little nature they originally possessed, with conventional forms and affectation, — it is only such, who stop at the external signs or modes of indication, whereby the social and unsocial dispositions are manifested. All persons, of even a moderate share of sense, look at the true meaning of the indications. They care whether the meaning is kindness, respect, delicacy and refinement of sentiment; regarding less whether those indications are made in well-trained looks and tones of voice, and easy and graceful, or awkward and angular, movements; as a reader for instruction cares more about the sense itself, than whether it is expressed in Hebrew, or Greek, or Roman characters. The teachers of manners, accordingly, attempt to embody the tones, expressions, and other external indications of social dispositions, in a system of rules of good breeding. The pupil is taught to simulate those dispositions; and as, in acting, it is said that those performers who feel least, often personate best, so in manners, those who are conscious of the total want of social impulses, are the most scrupulous cultivators of their external signs. They are polite, in proportion as they are selfish and heartless. While on the other hand it often happens, that persons of great generosity and overflowing philanthropy, not having the most remote apprehension that their real sentiments can be mistaken, are comparatively careless of their formal deportment towards others, and this negligence may occasionally amount to impoliteness. But those of a kind and social nature do not, by any means, always carry their harshness and simplicity to rudeness, or even to negligence; and, on the other hand, those void of all sympathy, do not always

affect to conceal their real indifference or malevolence under address and polish. In choosing intimate companions or friends, we ought to regard their real qualities ; for mere acquaintances, the exterior indications serve tolerably well as a criterion. Persons incapable of friendship and thorough intimacy, are apt not to seek beyond the external symbols in others ; they attach no particular meaning to the word *heart*, except as the name of a muscle. We see, then, how people must necessarily disagree respecting the manners of particular individuals, for the superficies of manner is all that some look for, or suppose to exist ; while others are easily satisfied of the truth of external indications, though these may be a lie ; and this deception is not to be wondered at, for simulators and dissemblers, like hypocrites, are the most rigid observers of ceremony. But others again may penetrate, or at least think they penetrate, the thin veil of courtesy, and see, under it, selfishness, paltry cunning, and impertinent egotism ; and to these the same bland, punctilious, and studious practice of the rules of the art of pleasing, as laid down by the best authorities, will sometimes be odious, as it will aggravate the deformity of the dissocial sentiments thus attempted to be dissembled, and, besides, will imply disrespect in supposing that others can be so easily deceived. Accordingly, manners that are quite charming to one, will be insipid or annoying, or seem to be impertinent, to another.

Now Mr. Bulwer dwells very much on the outside of his personages, as already remarked, and as is proved by his elaborate dissertations upon the springs and clock-work, and his pointing out to you the strings he pulls to make the automata work. The delineation of manners is, accordingly, a great part of his undertaking. And in this respect he gives himself a wide field, not hesitating to place his heroes and heroines in situations, by which his own knowledge of society is very severely tested ; and he does not fail to show his acquaintance with a great variety of forms of social intercourse. He appears to plume himself particularly on his skill in portraying fashionable life and manners. But in whatever scene he puts his persons, the manners are not the spontaneous incidents to the characters. Many of them, at least, as the author candidly confesses in the passage already cited, have no distinctive characters at all. His system is to take some passion, or *penchant*, or mode of thinking, or foible, and conduct it through various situations and adventures. The

conversation and conduct are collateral accompaniments to this passion or abstract quality, foible, or mode of thinking, making a very incoherent, ill-defined whole. In the works of the masters, the manners are natural and characteristic, flowing spontaneously from principles of action and motives and propensities, with which the reader is made familiar, not by a collateral dissertation by the author in the capacity of a looker on, but by the action. In Mr. Bulwer's novels, accordingly, there is an affectation and fastidiousness of manners pervading almost the whole *dramatis personæ*. The lesson of these works is, as already suggested, that veritable honor, veracity, principle, and sincerity of purpose, if they exist at all, have little to do with the happiness and fortunes of men or women ; that men come in contact only at the superficies, and that our exterior selves, being factitiously superinduced, take the place of our real selves, and, unless counteracted by fatality of circumstances, determine our fortunes. We are accordingly instructed, upon the Chesterfieldian system, to bestow our whole care upon the shell, — that the nucleus, the soul, the mind, the sentiments, and affections, are of little account. Now as the system of manners in these novels is, in general, avowedly based upon selfishness and prompted by egotism, the effect is similar to that of manners, influenced by the same motives in the actual intercourse of the world, where the disguise is seen through, and the hollowness and hypocrisy detected. For though the author discloses the motives, he does not disapprove of them ; on the contrary, he holds up plotting, designing *bienséance*, and hypocrisy, practised according to conventional rules and forms, as the true models of manners. A sensible reader, therefore, lays down the book in disgust with its practical doctrines ; a superficial, unprincipled reader, with fantastical notions of men and affairs, on the contrary, finds something quite congenial with himself in the book, and lays it down at the end with a very high opinion of his own and the author's philosophy and knowledge of mankind, and imagines the world to be tolerable, if it be indeed so, because there are so many people in it liable to be gulled, and used by means of their blind sides, follies, foibles, and simplicity. But he is the dupe, and honest, true men are the wise ; for selfishness, egotism, and conceit, and small cunning, carry their just penalty with them ; and a life of artifice and manceuvre is barren of all satisfaction, as well as pitiful.

The conduct of the plot is as difficult in a novel as in a drama. It is so difficult that many authors have no plot at all, but merely carry their hero through a series of adventures and scenes, having no connexion or common bearing. The whole is a fictitious journal. Mr. Bulwer makes a plot, but sometimes digresses, which is allowable upon sufficient reasons given. But he has one artifice, which, we think, has an effect contrary to his intention. He apparently pleases himself with mystifying the reader, by way of working up his interest, instead of which he sometimes fairly runs down his curiosity. He is kept in the dark so long that he becomes indifferent to it; or, if he sees through the design, it is a failure on the part of the author. Thus, in the case of Mordaunt, whom Mr. Bulwer considers a model in his kind, and an answer to some objections that had been made to his novels, he is kept a long time under the disguise of Glendower. The reader indeed suspects who he is, but if this is intended by the author, it is inartificial to affect to keep him in the dark, when that is not the design; if, on the other hand, he is supposed to be deceived and really is so, he is quite fatigued with following so long the fortunes of one, who apparently has not any connexion with the main plot. So in the same novel, as in some of the others, the author brings up his different divisions of persons from time to time; and for this purpose, to all appearance at the time, stops the progress of the plot. In this way, in the novel just mentioned, the main plot, namely, the disposing of the hero, stands still three quarters of the time, in consequence of the author's keeping his secret so well; whereas it seems to be more skilful and more exciting, to keep the reader, as he goes along, expressly apprized of some connexion of all the parts, and not leave him merely to suspect it. He must be made to wish most vehemently that Mr. Clarence should marry Miss Clara, and he may be permitted to suspect that it may so turn out, though he is not to be so assured of it, as not to be exceedingly distressed with the difficulties.

Whatever may be thought of these novels in other respects, the literary execution is certainly very fine; *fine*, in the better sense of the term, seems to us to give its general character. It is sparkling, brilliant, sententious, and full of classical allusion and antithesis. The stories embody a great mass of superficial knowledge, collected from a very wide circuit.

From this source the reader may bring away something for his pains.

But, of the philosophy and thinking, which occupy so great a space, we cannot speak in so high terms. These are not books of wisdom in respect to politics, political economy, or the philosophy of history, of society, or of the mind. In all these respects they seem to us to be always quite superficial, and often very false and pernicious.

Of the different novels, "The Pilgrims of the Rhine" is, in our estimation, decidedly the best. The author's brilliant sprightliness is applied, with remarkable success, in the burlesque way, to the fairies; and the digressions are pleasing, and introduced with address.

We should put next in rank, "Pelham" and "The Disowned." In one respect the latter may be classed with the historical novels of "The Last Days of Pompeii" and "Rienzi," and with "The Duchess de la Vallière," as it professes to give the manners and characteristic modes of thinking of seventy years ago; but, as a record of the past, we cannot think this, any more than the other historical novels, very successful. A false, fantastical glare is shed over the whole scene, as far as history is concerned. The labored eulogies upon Bolingbroke serve, as it seems to us, rather to depress the eulogist, than to raise the subject of them. The author cannot disengage himself from his own times, and identify himself with other times. It is all but disgusting, for instance, to meet with present Cockney dandyism, in the streets and *atria*, and Cockney slang, in the pot-houses of Pompeii, antedated some two thousand years, besides being placed far out of their true latitude.

Of "The Duchess de la Vallière" we have but little to say. It is said to play much more like Mr. Maelzel's automata worked by machinery, than like a genuine, dramatic performance. The attempt at a drama, with all the help of history to supply personages, betrays at once the defect apparent in the author's novels. The character, the individual entity, does not show himself. The persons move with a sort of spasmodic action, more as if they were put in motion by a galvanic battery, than as if animated by Promethean fire.
